

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated October 6, 2003 (U.S. Patent Office Paper No. 0903). In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

As outlined above, claims 8 and 17 to 19 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, while claims 9 and 20 to 22 are being amended to correct formal errors and to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject invention. Claims 1 to 7 and 10 to 16 and 23-26 were canceled in a previous communication with the Office.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 8 and 17 to 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamamoto *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 5,585,290 (further, Yamamoto '290) in view of Yamagata *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 6,528,824 (further, Yamagata '824).

Applicants respectfully submit that, as shown above, claims 8 and 17 to 19 have been canceled without prejudice and disclaimer. In light of the cancellation the rejection of the above claims is rendered moot.

Allowable subject matter

Claims 9 and 20 to 22 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating the allowability of claims 9 and 20 to 22 and respectfully submit that they have amended the claims to independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Conclusion

In view of all the above, Applicants respectfully submit that certain clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art references upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely. These differences are more

than sufficient that the present invention as now claimed would not have been anticipated nor rendered obvious given the prior art. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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